



**CCWW Sports Report No. 703
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by
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I'm writing this on Friday, October 18. The Cornell football season will be half-over tomorrow and most of the other fall sports teams are more than halfway through their seasons. Also, hockey practices are well underway and today the men and women will mix and match for the annual Red-White co-ed scrimmage. All of which is a long-winded way of saying that it's time for an updated sports report.

Mid-Season Report on Fall Sports

Eight years of reporting on Big Red athletics has caused me to shed my (to steal a phrase from Alan Greenspan) "irrational exuberance" about Cornell teams. I've tried to keep the exuberance but temper it, *i.e.*, display cautious optimism about the teams that are likely to do well and a reasonable degree of pessimism about the rest. And, at least for this one season, I can say that what I wrote might happen is happening—and for some teams the results are even a bit better than predicted. Here goes.

Volleyball. I expected the Big Red to be pretty good and they've been even better. As I write this (with a match tonight at Brown and a crucial visit to Yale coming on Saturday), the Red is riding a ten-match winning streak and are all alone at the top of the Ivy League with a 5-0 record. Volleyball is the best and most interesting of Cornell's fall sports teams. All matches from here on out are on ESPN+, and you should plan to start watching if you aren't already doing so. Except for next weekend, when the Red plays just once—at Columbia on Saturday, October 26, at 11:00 a.m. PDT—the matches are at 4 p.m. Pacific time on Fridays and 2 p.m. Pacific time on Saturdays. BTW, I'll be at the Columbia match on the 26th.

My prediction, after the Big Red went 4-2 in their first six matches, was that the Red would finish with an 11-3 Ivy record, and 18-5 overall. That may happen but at this point I'd actually be a tad disappointed if Cornell loses three league matches. They already have a four-set victory on the road over pre-season favorite Princeton.

Update: The Big Red swept Brown on Friday and have now won eleven in a row.

Men's Soccer. This is the other team I expected to be good and they have been, although not at the same level as Volleyball. Cornell has a 7-3 record (including a 3-2 overtime victory over last year's NCAA runner-up, Akron), and is 1-1 in league play. Like the volleyballers, the Big Red futbolers are in New Haven this weekend for a big showdown with the Elis. Their match is at 2:00 p.m. PDT today. Yale leads the league with a 2-0 record. Cornell lost its Ivy opener a few weeks back at Penn in a match that the Red dominated in every statistic but the final score. The match exemplified the Red's inability in several matches to turn shots and scoring opportunities into goals. After the loss at Penn, the Red needed a goal in the 75th minute to edge a weak Colgate team, 1-0. Last week, however, Cornell broke out of its scoring slump "bigly" with a 6-0 trouncing of Harvard. If the Big Red can get some consistent scoring, they could make a run at the Ivy title.

Update: The not-putting-shots-on-goal bugaboo hit this evening as the Big Red lost to Yale, 3-1, despite outshooting the Elis, 14-8. Back when the Red was 2-2, I felt that a 10-5-2 final record was plausible. To get there, Cornell now needs to post a 3-1-2 record in its remaining matches. That will be tough. Earlier I gave Cornell a one-in-three chance of winning the Ivy title. I now give the Red only a one-in-ten chance to do that.

Field Hockey. Before the season's start, it was unclear what would happen to this team. For several years, the Big Red had been consistently in the top half of the Ivy League but the bottom fell out last fall

and Cornell, playing under an interim coach, fell into a last-place tie in the league and finished with a 5-12 overall record. Now it looks like things have turned back around. The Big Red are 7-3 and were briefly ranked in the national top-25 before they lost to Cal last weekend. The Red should better my 9-8 predicted finish, although they have some tough games coming up, including this weekend against ranked Harvard and Albany teams.

Women's Soccer. Better than last year—without a doubt. But After winning just one match a year ago, the Big Red got off to a 4-0 start this fall. To quash any irrational exuberance, I cautioned that the last Cornell women's soccer team to start the year 4-0 ended up 7-7-1 and in last place in the Ivy League. Right now, Cornell is 4-6-1 and winless in three Ivy matches. Even my cautious prediction made after that 4-0 start of one more win than losses is not, I'm afraid, gonna happen.

Football. I'm writing this before the Big Red host winless Colgate tomorrow at Schoellkopf. So far Cornell is 1-3; a .250 winning percentage that precisely matches **David Archer '05's** first six years as the Red's head coach (15-45 - .250). I was in Poughkeepsie for the Red's opening game and only win (over Marist) and I've watched all of the other games on ESPN+. Cornell's best quarterback, **Mike Catanese '20**, is gone for the season, which I suppose we'll hear is some sort of excuse for why, yet again, Coach Archer's team is not very good. Don't buy it! To begin with, the Cornell coaches weren't even smart enough before the season began to understand that Catanese was by far their best option. Coach Archer claimed that Mike and **Richie Kenney '21** were about even. Puhleeze! Maybe if we had a quarterbacks coach, or someone on the coaching staff who had actually played quarterback, or even someone like me who never played college football but has decent eyesight and is not a moron, we'd be in better shape. But we don't. Cornell's defense is pretty good but the offense is a mess. The program is a mess. I hope I'm wrong but I expect to see the Big Red finding a way tomorrow to hand Colgate its first win of the season. It's way past time for a coaching change.

Sprint Football. Believe it or not, the team described in the previous paragraph is not Cornell's worst football team. That would be Sprint Football. The Big Red won its opener against Alderson Broaddus, a Baptist university in West Virginia, playing its first football game ever. Since then, the Big Red have been, well, horrible. To have a reasonably successful season, the Red needed to beat Penn. Did not happen: final score, Penn 61, Cornell 7. Ugh! The Big Red then played Army. Final score, Army 49, Cornell 0. The last three years Army has defeated the Red by a combined score of 155-0. Could things get worse? 'Fraid so. Two weeks ago, the Big Red lost by 20 points to St. Thomas Aquinas, a small liberal arts college in Rockland County that only started playing the sport last fall. I wrote a month ago that Cornell would not lose to Aquinas. Wrong! Tonight, the Big Red take on Mansfield, the perennial doormat of the CSFL. (Princeton was worse but they gave the sport up a few years ago.) If the Red lose to Mansfield, it may be time for an intervention.

Update: Mansfield 44, Cornell 13. Intervention needed ASAP!

Cross-Country. Both the men and the women are coming off disappointing seasons and looking to improve. The women may, in fact, be a bit better than a year ago; the men's situation is more problematic. Both teams have had two major meets so far, the Iona Meet of Champions at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx in September and the Paul Short Invitational two weeks ago at Lehigh. The women finished second of the eleven teams at the Iona meet, losing decisively to Columbia but beating all the other teams. At the Paul Short run, the women were tenth in the 43-team field, behind Ivies Penn and Princeton but ahead of Dartmouth. The men were ninth in the 18-team Iona field and 21st in the 45-team Paul Short field. Tomorrow both teams will compete in the pre-nationals meet in Terra Haute, Indiana.

Hockey Preview

Last year the Big Red women went to the Frozen Four (losing in the national semi-finals to Minnesota), while the men missed the Frozen Four by one win, losing in the east regional final to Providence. This year both teams are, coincidentally, picked for fifth in the national pre-season polls. The men are predicted to win the ECAC title, while the women are picked to finish second in the ECAC. In other words, things are looking good.

The women return the “core four” from last year’s national semifinalist—forwards **Kristen O’Neill ’20** and **Maddie Mills ’21**, and defenders **Micah Zandee-Hart ’20** and **Jaime Bourbonnais ’20**. Lost to graduation was goaltender **Marlène Boissonnault ’19** but she should be ably replaced by **Lindsay Browning ’21**, who actually posted better numbers last year than Marlène. The Big Red also lost three forwards to graduation, the team’s fifth, eighth and tenth leading scorers, but those losses should be offset by improvement of returning players and four incoming first years. I’m finishing this up with the benefit of today’s Red-White scrimmage results, which gives us a few clues about the health of the rosters and what we might get from the first years; **Sydney Breza ’23** got the first goal of the game and **Bella Kang ’22**, who did not get much ice time a year ago, scored on a penalty shot so maybe there’s some new help to be found there.

The Cornell women open with two games at home next weekend against Robert Morris, then move right into ECAC play the following weekend as Quinnipiac and Princeton come to Ithaca. The Big Red’s other non-conference games are two at Ohio State, two at home against Mercyhurst, and a game at Syracuse. All in all, this should be a very successful season with a return trip to the Frozen Four a real possibility.

The Cornell men will have two more exhibition games before opening their season at Michigan State on November 1st and 2nd. The Big Red will be looking to avenge what was an ugly opening to last year, when the Red lost twice to the Spartans in Ithaca. Like the women, Cornell’s men’s team has a raft of returning players from last year’s very good team. Most of the goaltending chores will be handled by **Matt Galajda ’21**, who was an All-American as a freshman. He’ll be backed up by **Austin McGrath ’21**, who played enough last year that he, and not Galajda, was the first-team All-Ivy goalie. Five of the top six scoring-forwards return, led by first team All-ECAC wing **Morgan Barron ’21**, who shows signs of being a star. The defense will be led by **Yanni Kaldis ’20**, a second team All-ECAC defenseman and **Alex Green ’21**, who missed 15 games last year due to injuries. The biggest challenge will be replacing three solid defensemen who graduated. There are four defensemen in the freshman class and hopefully one or two of these are ready to contribute this year.

After the games in East Lansing, the Big Red open ECAC play against Brown and Yale. Cornell’s other five non-conference game are (1) the biannual “Red Hockey Hockey” showdown with B.U. in Madison Square Garden the Saturday after Thanksgiving, (2) a visit to Las Vegas for the “Fortress Invitational” where the Red will play Ohio State and then either Providence or Army, and (3) a two-game visit to Ithaca by Northern Michigan. I’m seriously considering making it down to Vegas for the tournament down there. And, in case you’re wondering, the men’s Frozen Four next spring will be in Detroit, just a short flight away on Alaska or Delta.

I’ll be back next month. **GO BIG RED!**